

NOTES ON THE LIFE HISTORY OF *OPODIPHTHERA FERVIDA* (JORDAN) (LEPIDOPTERA: SATURNIIDAE)

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Abstract

The mature larva of *Opodiphthera fervida*, which feeds on *Maesa muelleri* Mez and *Rapanea porosa* (F. Muell.) Mez (both Myrsinaceae), is described. It lacks the yellow lateral stripes present on the closely related species *O. astrophela* (Walker) for which *Alstonia constricta* F. Muell. (Apocynaceae) is recorded as a new food plant. The cocoon of *O. fervida* is similar to other species of *Opodiphthera*.

Introduction

Opodiphthera fervida occurs in rainforest between Mossman and Paluma in north eastern Queensland (Common 1990). Its life history has not previously been described. On the Atherton Tableland adults usually appear during November, after the first summer storms, and are present until late January. They have also been collected during April, suggesting a second brood.

In December 1992, mature larvae of *O. fervida* were found feeding on the vine *Maesa muelleri* near Longlands Gap, 20 km south of Atherton, and again during April 1993, feeding on *Rapanea porosa* (F. Muell.) Mez (both Myrsinaceae (Williams 1984)), near Lake Eacham, Queensland.

Final instar larva: head smooth, reddish brown. Prothoracic shield reddish brown, supporting fine, short, white setae. Larva very stout, black, with raised red scoli, supporting numerous white setae and small, branched secondary setae. Thoracic segments 2-3 and abdominal segments 1-7 each carrying four upper scoli, and one smaller scoli below spiracles; abdominal segment 8 carrying 3 upper scoli, as well as the smaller scoli below spiracles; abdominal segment 9 with 4 upper scoli; a reddish line running laterally below spiracles on abdominal segments 1-9, connecting the lower scoli; spiracles elliptical, distinctly white; thoracic legs reddish brown, supporting very fine, short setae; prolegs and anal prolegs very stout, black, supporting many short whitish setae.

Larvae leave the food plant to seek a pupation site, often on adjoining trees or vines. The cocoon is similar to those of other *Opodiphthera* species, being tough, oval, and spun between several folded or overlapping leaves. Occasionally, several larvae pupated together, with cocoons placed side by side within folded leaves.

Adults of *Opodiphthera fervida* are very similar to those of *O. astrophela* (Walker), which occurs from central Queensland to central New South Wales (Common 1990). I have collected larvae of the latter species near Toowoomba, southern Queensland, feeding on *Alstonia constricta* F. Muell. (Apocynaceae). They are similar to those of *O. fervida* but differ in having only yellow lateral stripes on the thoracic and abdominal segments.

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References

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